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ABSTRACT

The street children of Brazil live in unimaginable poverty and squalor, stealing jewelry or selling their bodies to survive, wandering homeless and untaught, pursued by death squads who clean up the streets by washing them with blood. The street youthworkers interviewed for the in-depth study delineated in this book some inspired by the Catholic Church liberation theology movement, some employed by the Brazilian government or private agencies, continue their efforts to help and heal these children, often with remarkable success. Many of the issues discussed may be familiar to any social service worker, including: the problems of how to identify, classify, and count the children of the streets; the reasons children leave or lose their homes; the implications of policy decisions and socioeconomic forces on the children's lives; the clash between law-and-order advocates and social service professionals; the negative effects of deinstitutionalization and overcrowded youth homes; the tragic societal consequences of the widening gap between rich and poor; the problems of youth crime and violence; and the difficulties in delivering education, health care, and basic services for homeless children. The book offers a detailed history of the development of street social education; a study of the aims, methods, and experiences of youthworkers; and practical advice on using the principles and practices of street social education to reach the at-risk youth of any country. An extensive list of references is included. (BT)

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